

Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Smith Barton, February 14, 1801 , from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

TO DR. BENJAMIN SMITH BARTON¹

¹ From the original in the possession of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Washington, Feb. 14, 1801.

Dear Sir, —Your favor of Jan. 18 is duly received. The subject of it did not need apology. On the contrary, should I be placed in office, nothing would be more desirable to me than the recommendations of those in whom I have confidence, of persons fit for office; for if the good withhold their testimony, we shall be at the mercy of the bad. If the question relative to Mr. Zantzinger had been merely that of remaining in office, your letter would have placed him on very safe ground. Besides that, no man who has conducted himself according to his duties would have anything to fear from me, as those who have done ill would have nothing to hope, be their political principles what they might. The obtaining an appointment presents more difficulties. The republicans have been excluded from all offices from the first origin of the division into Republican and Federalist. They have a reasonable claim to vacancies till they occupy their due share. My hope however is that the distinction will be soon lost, or at most that it will be only of republican & monarchist: that the body of the nation, even that part which French excesses forced over to the federal side, will rejoin the republicans, leaving only those who were pure monarchists, and who will be too few to form a sect. This is the fourth day of the ballot, and nothing done; nor do I see any reason to suppose the six and a half States here will be less firm, as they call it, than your 13. Senators; if so, and the government should expire on the 3d

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of March by the loss of it's head, there is no regular provision for reorganizing it, nor any authority but in the people themselves. They may authorize a convention to reorganize & even to amend the machine. There are 10. individuals in the H of R, any one of whom changing his vote may save us this troublesome operation. Be pleased to present my friendly respects to Mrs. Barton, Mrs. Sarjeant, and Mrs. Waters, and to accept yourself my affectionate salutations.